

# 11 Snowmobiles, ORVs, and Watercraft — Some Facts to Know

Michigan provides many recreational opportunities for snowmobiles, off-road vehicles (ORVs), and watercraft with its extensive network of trails and more than 11,000 lakes. With so many outdoor enthusiasts enjoying Michigan's trails and waterways, we offer this special chapter on snowmobiles, ORVs, and watercraft. Additional information is available on our website at [www.Michigan.gov/sos](http://www.Michigan.gov/sos) or the Department of Natural Resources website at [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr).

## Snowmobiles

You may register your snowmobile at any Secretary of State office. All snowmobiles used on public lands must display a three-year registration decal and an annual Snowmobile Trail Permit sticker. Snowmobile trail permits are required for both residents and nonresidents. The registration decal and trail permit are not required for snowmobiles used on private land. Agents of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), including sporting goods stores, local retailers, snowmobile dealers, department stores, and resort motels, sell trail permits. Visit the DNR website, [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr), for the location nearest you. The website also has information about Michigan laws regarding snowmobile operation as well as guides to the snowmobile trails.

## Off-Road Vehicles (ORVs)

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issues all ORV decals. The decals are valid for one year. All ORVs operated on public lands must display a valid ORV decal except in special circumstances. Please contact the DNR for more information.

Some communities in northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula have recently enacted laws allowing ORVs to travel

on the road. Check with local law enforcement for information specific to your community.

## **Snowmobiles, ORVs, and Alcohol**

Michigan's tough stand against drinking and driving includes snowmobiles and ORVs in an effort to reduce the risk of injury, death, or damage to personal property. Any violations and points you receive for drinking while operating a snowmobile or ORV are placed on your driving record. Points added to your driving record may result in your driver's license being suspended or revoked, preventing you from driving any motor vehicle in Michigan. Fines and penalties increase with additional convictions.

You may also be denied an original Commercial Driver License and an original Driver Training Instructor License.

## **A Summary of Snowmobile (SM) and ORV Crimes**

### **First conviction: Operating While Impaired (OWI)**

Sanctions:

- (ORV) Up to 12 days of community service.
- (SM) Up to 45 days of community service.
- (SM, ORV) Up to 93 days in jail.
- (SM, ORV) Fines up to \$300.
- (SM, ORV) May not operate SM/ORV for 90 days to one year.
- (SM, ORV) Four points added to driving record.

### **Second conviction within seven years: Operating While Impaired (OWI)**

Sanctions:

- (ORV) Up to 12 days of community service.
- (ORV) Up to one year in jail.
- (ORV) Fines up to \$1,000.
- (ORV) May not operate ORV for six months to 18 months.

- (SM) 10 days to 90 days of community service and jail up to one year or up to 90 days community service and jail for two days to one year.
- (SM) Fines from \$200 to \$1,000.
- (SM) May not operate SM for six months to two years.
- (SM, ORV) Four points added to driving record.

**First conviction: Operating Under the Influence of Liquor (OUIL)/Operating Under the Influence of Drugs (OUID)/Unlawful Bodily Alcohol Content (UBAC)**

Sanctions – one or more of the following:

- (ORV) Up to 12 days community service.
- (SM) Up to 45 days of community service.
- (SM, ORV) Up to 93 days in jail.
- (SM, ORV) Fines from \$100 to \$500.
- (SM, ORV) May not operate SM/ORV for six months to two years.
- (SM, ORV) Six points added to driving record.
- (SM, ORV) \$1,000 Driver Responsibility fee for two consecutive years.

**Second conviction within seven years: Operating Under the Influence of Liquor (OUIL)/Operating Under the Influence of Drugs (OUID)/Unlawful Bodily Alcohol Content (UBAC)**

Sanctions:

- (ORV) Up to 12 days community service.
- (SM) 10 days to 90 days of community service and jail up to one year or up to 90 days community service and jail for two days to one year.
- (ORV) Up to \$1000 fine.
- (SM) Fines from \$200 to \$1,000.
- (ORV) May not operate ORV for one to two years.
- (SM) Revocation of SM operating privileges.

- (SM, ORV) Six points added to driving record.
- (SM, ORV) \$1,000 Driver Responsibility fee for two consecutive years.

**Any conviction – causing serious injury (felony): Operating Under the Influence of Liquor (OUIL)/Operating While Intoxicated (OWI)**

Sanctions:

- (SM, ORV) Up to five years in jail or fines from \$1,000 to \$5,000 or both.
- (SM) Revocation of SM operating privileges.
- (SM, ORV) Six points added to driving record.
- (SM, ORV) \$1,000 Driver Responsibility fee for two consecutive years.

**Any conviction – causing death (felony): Operating Under the Influence of Liquor (OUIL)/Operating While Intoxicated (OWI)**

Sanctions:

- (SM, ORV) Up to 15 years in jail or fines from \$2,500 to \$10,000 or both.
- (SM) Revocation of SM operating privileges.
- (SM, ORV) Six points added to driving record.
- (SM, ORV) \$1,000 Driver Responsibility fee for two consecutive years.

## **Watercraft**

All watercraft on Michigan waters, including privately owned lakes and waterways, must be registered except:

- Watercraft 16 feet or less, propelled by oars or paddles, and not used for rental or commercial purposes.
- Nonmotorized canoes and kayaks not used for rental or commercial purposes, rafts, surfboards, sailboards, and swim floats, regardless of length.

- Watercraft registered in another state and used only temporarily in Michigan.

For most watercraft, the registration fee is based on the length of the watercraft. All registrations expire on March 31 in the third year of issuance.

### **A Note About Personal Watercraft**

Personal watercraft (PWC) are a popular form of recreation on Michigan's lakes and rivers. To operate a PWC in Michigan, the following age requirements are in effect:

- If you were born after Dec. 31, 1978, you must have a boating safety certification to operate a PWC.
- You must be at least age 14 to operate a PWC.
- No child under age 12 may operate a PWC. However, children ages 12 and 13 may operate a PWC **if all of the following apply:**
  - The child is accompanied solely by the parent or legal guardian.
  - Both the child and parent or guardian have a boating safety certificate.
  - The PWC is equipped with a lanyard-type engine cutoff switch that is attached to the parent or guardian.
- **Beginning October 2011**, the age requirements for operating a PWC change:
  - You must be at least age 16 to operate a PWC.
  - No child under age 14 may operate a PWC.
  - Children ages 14-15 may operate a PWC if they are accompanied by a parent, guardian or designated adult age 21 or older, OR if they are operating the PWC within 100 feet of a parent, legal guardian or designated adult age 21 or older.